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ABSTRACT

Parents who spend time with their children have the greatest impact on their children's educational development. According to one survey, the average parent spends only a few minutes a day with his or her child. Active listening and verbal feedback by a parent can increase a child's self-confidence. Offering the child problem-solving opportunities and praising the child's suggestions also increase his or her feelings of self-worth. Education specialists suggest that by honoring children, discussing their daily activities, and focusing on the positive aspects of the things that they do, parents can help make their children better communicators and learners. (SG)

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TEACHING YOUR CHILD THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

by Reed Markham

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by Reed Markham

If a child lives with criticism he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness he learns justice.

If a child lives with security he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship he learns to find love in the world.

-Dorothy Nolte

Children learn about themselves from interaction with parents, family members and friends. Communication researchers believe that parents who spend time with their child have the greatest impact on their child's educational development. Time spent communicating with a child also has a strong effect on a child feelings of self worth. It is critical that parents spend time actively listening to their child as well as speaking to them.

A *Time* magazine survey indicated that the average American parent spends only a few minutes a day with their children. Active listening requires putting down the newspaper, turning off the television set, or stopping another activity to focus in on the child's message; asking follow up questions when you are not sure what a child is saying; and reflecting in your own words the child's message. A parent's verbal feedback is a signal to the child that you are actively listening. With active listening your child will experience an increase in self confidence and feel that what they say is important.

Problem solving situations create an opportunity to practice active listening skills. For example, when you have a problem situation get your child's advice on how to solve it. If you are trying to decide what to fix for dinner you may want to ask your child what they would fix. After the child suggests a solution, praise the solution and try to implement some of their ideas. Praise will increase your child's feelings of positive self worth.

Some parents take a "do as I say, not as I do" attitude to teaching their children. When a child views an inconsistency between words and actions it creates conflict in their minds and the child will become insecure about what to say and how to act. Parents who are congruent with words and actions build a child's self confidence. Remember that parents serve as role models for their children.

Communication researchers believe that you cannot not communicate. Our nonverbals--eyes, face, voice, and gestures speak louder than words. In

communicating with your child try to focus on positive verbal and nonverbal communication skills. Some of these positive verbal and nonverbal communication skills include using humor, praising a child when they do something right, and avoiding negative terms such as "don't."

Dr. Alvin Price, a child education specialist suggests the following activities for helping your child to become a better communicator and learner.

First, pick a night each week to honor each of your children. Allow them to select the games to play and the treats to be served. The activities may include a slide show about the child or discussing one of their hobbies or school projects.

Second, take about ten minutes and discuss something that happened to your child that day. Be an active listener--ask follow up and clarifying questions.

Third, select a time period during the day and avoid any negative or critical communication concerning your child's behavior. For example, if your child jumps on the furniture, in a calm manner suggest something else for them to do. Focus on the positive.

Teaching through effective communication is a daily process that requires concentrated effort. A child will not become a self confident learner by osmosis.

Positive communication can facilitate a child's desire to learn and help them develop confidence in their ability to cope with daily life.